GETTING TO KNOW THE ART OF EXCELLENCE: WHAT NEURO LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING CAN OFFER TO TEACHERS' THINKING AND REPROGRAMMING SKILLS

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Abstract: *Building on the strategies of thinking and reprogramming taken from Neuro Lingustic Programming (NLP), this article argues that it is possible for us to change our thought structures and reprogram ourselves in order to achieve the outcomes that we want for ourselves whether in a personal or a professional context. The article contends that the individual has the powers that they need in order to achieve their true potential. The article first presents a brief definition of NLP followed by brief background information on the origins of NLP. The discussion then turns to understanding the structure of thought and the strategy of reprogramming: establishing well-formed criteria. Two techniques for establishing well-formed criteria are proposed and discussed. The article ends with a conclusion summarizing the argument and making concluding suggestions for achieving our true potential.*

Key Words: *Neuro, Linguistic, Programming, structure of thought, outcomes, Live Levels, creative visualization*

Mükemmellik Sanatını Öğrenme: Nero Linguistik Programlamanın Öğretmenlere Düşünme ve Yeniden Programlama Açısından Sağlayabileceği Beceriler

Özet: *Bu makale, Nero Linguistik Programlama'dan (NLP) yola çıkarak, düşünce yapımızı değiştirerek ve kendimizi yeniden programlayarak istediğimiz amaçlara ulaşabileceğimizi iddia etmektedir. Makalenin temel aldığı inanç, bir bireyin kişisel veya mesleki bağlamda istediklerini gerçekleştirebilecek yeteneklere sahip olduğudur. Makale ilk olarak NLP'nin kısa bir tanımını ve nasıl ortaya çıktığını vermektedir. Bu kısa girişten sonra, düşüncenin yapısını anlatan ve yeniden programlamaya örnek bir strateji önerilmektedir. Bu strateji iyi biçimlenmiş amaçlardır. Bu bağlamda 2 teknik önerilmektedir: Son olarak da makalede anlatılmaya çalışılan teorinin özeti ve kendi potansiyelimizi gerçekleştirirken bize yardımcı olacak öneriler yer almaktadır.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Öğretmen yetiştirme, duygu, etkinliklerin bilişsel değerlendirilmesi, etkinlik değerlendirme stilleri*

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Introduction

A feeder field cited as one of the alternative approaches and methods in the teaching of English as a foreign language is Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Drawing on principles from linguistics and psychology, NLP investigates how the mind works, in cooperation with the body (Alder, 1999; Garratt, 1999; O'Connor and Seymour, 1994; Revell & Norman, 1997). By providing techniques and strategies that can help learners to achieve intended outcomes, NLP can enable personal and professional change and improvement.

Research that may be considered academic is scarce (Tosey, 2010).. Some studies investigating the use of NLP techniques and strategies for learning and teaching have addressed the teacher's communication skills such as "establishing rapport, reframing and anchoring success" in order to create "teacher-learner congruence" (Milrood, 2004, p. 36). Other have addressed the use of NLP techniques in teaching and learning such as visualization and learning styles, offering practical frameworks for classroom use (Gül Peker, 2010; Hannaford, 1995). There are also studies done on anxiety and A neglected issue seems to be a discussion of NLP philosophy and strategies from the teacher's point of view, in particular from the perspective of personal development with the teacher as a thinker and programmer, working on his or her own self in order to achieve excellence.

This article discusses the ways in which NLP strategies involving teachers' thinking and reprogramming skills can be enabled. Most of us are raised and educated with a limited image of what we are capable of achieving ourselves (Dilts, 1993). When viewed from this perspective, NLP offers an invaluable set of strategies that can help us to acknowledge who we truly are and the roles we play in creating and manifesting the world that appears outside of us that is to say, the reality we experience. If it is true that our role is extremely important in manifesting our own life experience and in creating the reality that we want for ourselves, then, as teachers, we can make use of NLP strategies in order to achieve our full potential.

To this end, this article first gives a brief definition of NLP followed by brief background information as regards the origins of NLP in order to create a better understanding of its aims and scope. Then, the article reviews the philosophy of NLP focusing on presuppositions. The discussion then turns to the structure of thought and the strategy of reprogramming. Two techniques for establishing well-formed outcomes are offered.

Definition and Origins of NLP

NLP is a method and process for discovering patterns that experts use in any field to achieve outstanding results. "Neuro" refers to all behavior that stems from our neurological processes of the five senses. "Linguistic" draws attention to language that organizes our thoughts and behavior when communicating with self and others. It relates to how we communicate our thoughts to others and to ourselves via verbal and non-verbal language. "Programming" focuses on ways that we can choose to recognize our ideas and actions in order to produce the results that we want in life. Most of the

things that we do in life and as teachers consist of programs or habits. NLP can provide
us with tools and strategies that can help us to upgrade our programs or reprogram
ourselves in line with our goals and dreams (Dilts, 1983; Knight, 2005; Robbins, 2001).

In short, NLP is a model of how our brains work, how language interacts with the
brain, and how to use this knowledge to systematically and methodically reprogram
ourselves and others. As noted, such a technology is extremely important in the way
teachers think and reprogram themselves for the purpose of becoming masters at the art
of excellence and achieving their true potential as teachers.

NLP was originated in the early 1970s by Bandler and Grinder (1979) who studied
excellent communicators in order to find the difference that makes the difference
between people who are excellent, and others. Richard Bandler, a computer scientist
and Gestalt therapist, and Dr John Grinder, a linguist and therapist studied three
successful therapists Milton Erickson, the father of modern hypnotherapy; Fritz Perls,
the creator of Gestalt therapy; and Virginia Satir, the mother of modern-day family
therapy. Bandler and Grinder to know what made these therapists effective and to train
others in their methodology. The result of their work culminated in what is known as
NLP today. It is the methodology of modelling that their work was based on. Over time,
many others have added to it, and the co-creators have continued to change and develop
NLP. Today it encapsulates a wide body of learning.

With input from many disciplines, NLP has now become an eclectic approach to
growth and change in many areas such as business (Alder, 1999; Knight, 2005; Tosey,
2010); communication (Charvet, 1997; Dixon, Parr, Yarbrough & Rathael, 1986;
Laborde, 1995; Robbins, 2001; Rosenberg, 2000; Skinner & Stephens, 2003); creativity
(Buzan, 2001; Dilts, Epstein & Dilts, 1991); health and well-being (Dilts, 1990; Konefal
& Duncan, 1998) and teaching and learning (Hamilton, 2003; Revell & Norman, 1997,
1999; Rose & Nicholl, 1999).

Although NLP may have been received with some scepticism and criticism, and best
thought of as "a set of strategies rather than a theory or model" (Craft, 2001), as a
method it has much to offer in terms of affective learning (Tomlinson, 2004), in
particular for accessing "optimal affective learning states" (Puchta, 1999, p. 247).
Among the techniques and principles that can be used to access such resourceful states
of mind are visualization, representational systems and sub-modalities, anchoring,
timelines and the use of metaphor and stories (Revell & Norman, 1999). This article
reviews the related literature on the different kinds of studies done in NLP and seeks to
answer the question of how NLP techniques can be implemented in the classroom.

NLP is quite different from other personal development systems. It is an eclectic
methodology containing many models, techniques and procedures, which is why it
defies simple definitions. Those who explore the possibilities reap the rewards not just
in their business life, but on a personal level too.

Understanding Thinking and Reprogramming

The Structure of Thought

The neurological processes of seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting and smelling form the basic building blocks of our experience, that is to say our thought structures. The structure of thought can be examined in terms of how we use our nervous system to think. This section of the article draws attention to understanding the process of thinking and reprogramming. Such an understanding is essential in becoming aware of how we think as what we think we become.

Understanding the Structure of Thought

Any behavior is accompanied by an internal state followed by an internal thought process of some kind. It is of crucial importance to understand this thought process as in achieving behavior change, we need to start with this internal state and thought process. Unless the desired new behavior can be generated using the same internal state and thought process, no theory, model or procedure is likely to change the behavior.

Thinking is using the power of our imagination to create what we want in our life and there are three main ways of thinking. The first is thinking in images . These people are visual thinkers. For example, if you are a visual thinker and are thinking about your last or next holiday trip, you will see images of the hotel that you stayed or will stay at, the clothes that you were or will be wearing and perhaps the restaurant that you had or you will have lunch in.

The second type of thinker is an auditory thinker. This person tends to think of sounds. Taking the holiday example, you are more likely to remember or construct a conversation among your friends or their laughter. You may also remember or construct the sounds at a dinner table. The third type of thinker is a kinaesthetic thinker. This person tends to think in terms of feelings which are very important to them. Thinking back to the same holiday example, if you are a kinaesthetic thinker, then you will think about the feelings that you may have experienced on your last holiday or those that you will experince on your next trip. These feelings can be positive ones such as happiness and excitement or negative ones like boredom and anger.

While people are experiencing or representing visually they tend to use visual language such as "I see what you mean." While people are experiencing or representing auditorily, they tend to use auditory language such as "I hear what you are saying.". The kinaesthetics on the other hand, will use phrases or sentences like, "I can feel it I my bones (Garratt, 1999; Knight, 2005; Robbins, 2001) (See Revell & Norman, 1997 for a list of words and phrases for each thinking system).

Reprogramming

"If we can change ourselves, we can change the world. We're not the victims of the world we see; we're the victims of the way we see the world."

The second point that this article draws attention to is the issue of reprogramming. Programming refers to behavioral patterns that have been learned through experience

and that can be organized to achieve specific goals in life. As noted, the programs that we are accustomed to our the results of our everyday habits. In order to be able to change them, we need to reprogram them. In this sense, NLP offers a wide variety of techniques and strategies that we can use to reprogram ourselves as teachers.

This section first discusses the principles of reprogramming as programming means adopting a different set of principles. In the light of these principles, the article suggests strategies for establishing outcomes.

NLP Principles

There are a set of assumptions that underlie NLP. These are called "presuppositions" and can help us to be successful in reprogramming ourselves. As Revell & Norman (1997) note, they need not "be accepted as absolute truth but acting as if they were true can make a world of difference in your life and in your teaching" (p.15). Below are some of these presuppositions:

1. *The map is not the territory.*

First, there is a map of the world. Second comes the person's experience of the world. This experience is the person's 'map' or 'model' of the world. These two experiences are different for each person. Every individual creates a unique model of the world and thus lives in a somewhat different reality from everyone else. This subjective experience may or may not be a reflection of reality. Each person's map differs from the territory it represents, and each person's map differs somewhat from every other map.

The implications for us as teachers are important. In trying to understand our learners, we may want to think about their maps in cases when communication may break down. Understanding others and in particular understanding our learners is perhaps can enable us to reprogram our behaviors. Our reactions can turn into responses which in turn will help our learners to acknowledge and work on their own concerns. Such an awareness can also provide us with an extremely powerful means of self-reflection.

2. *The resources that we need are within us.*

People have all they need to make changes they want to make. The task is to locate or access those resources and to make them available in the appropriate context. NLP provides techniques to accomplish this task.

This presupposition can enable a person to move towards reprogramming oneself in that the necessary qualities to accomplish a particular task ranging from making oneself more motivated in accomplishing that task to communicating with others in a pleasant and fulfilling manner. As teachers, one of our roles is to provide our learners who may lack the necessary confidence, patience or determination to achieve the tasks that they have in mind.

3. *Mind and body are interconnected.*

Mind and body are parts of the same system and affect each other. There is no separate 'mind' and no separate 'body'. That is to say, they act as one and they influence each other in such a way that there is no separation.

You may want to think back to your teaching and recall days during which you may not have felt particularly motivated to conduct your lessons. Such a state of mind can indicate that the mind and body were not acting in harmony. NLP can offer techniques to bring mind and body to a balance. In particular the technique of visualization is extremely powerful as it creates a resourceful state.

4. *There is no failure; only feedback.*

If a person doesn't succeed in something, that doesn't mean they have failed. It just means that they have discovered one way not to do that particular thing. More often than not, we tend to criticize ourselves for the slightest mistake. NLP holds that these mistakes comprise excellent feedback for doing future tasks.

Let us think of a classroom situation which may not necessarily be related to teaching and learning. Let us imagine that as a teacher you have responded to a learner using the visual channel and s/he has not been entirely satisfied. NLP informs us that this is feedback for the future. Thus, when you are interacting with that particular learner or those thay may prefer to think in visual ways, you know that you can use either the auditory or the kinaesthetic channel of communication.

5. *Communication is non-verbal as well as verbal.*

We do not communicate only with words; our body language, gestures and physiology all affect successful communication. NLP has an exciting array of techniques and strategies than can help teachers become excellent communicators, both verbally and non-verbally (See Revell & Norman, 1997). A study done by researcher Mehrabian indicates the percentage of non-verbal communication as 55, with 38 % of non-verbal communication provided through voice tonality and the remaining 7 % through words (Revell & Norman, 1997).

As teachers, it is important to be aware of our non-verbal communication. Since learners are likely to consider us as role-models, we have a great tool that we can use to impress our learners. The aim is to be as congruent as we can which means that the message that we are giving verbally is the same as the message that we are giving non-verbally.

6. *The meaning of my communication is the response I get.*

The effect of your communication or the response you get confirms the effectiveness of your communication. This presupposition is about claiming responsibility for our actions. There is always a choice and we are responsible for the response that we get in any communication.

Admittedly, the everyday scenario of teaching is abound with instances of communication which may or may not go wrong. Instead of experiencing feelings of

anger, disappointment or frustration and blaming our learners, we have a choice. This choice means doing something different than what we have done. In effect,t means changing ourselves as opposed to trying to change our learners.

7. *Every behavior has a positive intention.*

NLP holds that behind every behavior is a positive intent. A person makes the best choice available to them at any moment in time. This presupposition is perhaps the most difficult to accept. Yet, it does show benefit for the person who is exhibiting the behavior and not the receiver (Alder, 1999; Dilts, 1990; Knight, 2005; Revell & Norman, 1997;

In terms of the teaching context, it means trying to look for some positive benefit that studens are getting from their own behavior, although we may find this behavior unhelpful or irritating. For example, if you think that a certain student is rebellious or that he pays no attention to your questions, you may react negatively. However, the learner's behavior does have a a positive intention. As the teacher, we cannot influence or change the negative behavior unless we can recognize that positive intention behind the behavior. Such an attempt may help us to adopt a way of thinking that allows a person to uncover information that is missing, unconscious, or hidden. Similar to what believing the other presuppositions can do, this will bring forth is a powerful way of reprogramming ourselves.

In sum, an awareness of NLP principles or presuppositions can enable us to become experts at reprogramming ourselves. In terms of reprogramming our teaching, if we are aware of these principles, then we can achieve not only better intra-personal but also inter-personal communication in the classroom. By focusing on the usefulness of NLP methodology for reprogramming and not the truthfulness of it, we can see that NLP works for our best interest and can help us to create the reality that we would like to see happen in a most satisfying manner.

Outcomes

Among others, the second important tool in reprogramming ourselves is establishing goals or in NLP terms, outcomes. This reflects the presupposition that knowing what you want helps you to get it. If you are clear about what you want, then you can move towards your outcome, be it personal or professional. As Revell & Norman (1997) note, it is not possible "to talk about goals without talking about dreams" (p.57). Giving an example of a successful and creative person, they quote a very essential issue in deciding on outcomes, " Change your plan. Keep your dream". Dreaming helps us to become aware of these choices that are available to us. Then, it becomes possible for us to choose from them and focus on the one that we would like to make happen. This section of the article discusses two very powerful techniques that we can use to establish outcomes *Life Levels* and *Visualization.*

Life Levels

The first step toward the art of excellence in thinking and reprogramming ourselves is to know what you want. If you think of it like a trip, this is the first essential step. In other words, to produce the kind of results that you want, you need to know what you want. The art of excellence means producing the results you choose. So, the first step is to choose.

There are, however, some drawbacks to choosing effectively. In fact, many people are so driven by what they feel they have to do, that they do not usually focus on what they want to do. For a moment, think about what you would like to do if you had more time. More specifically, ask yourself what it is that you will do when you have enough time. Such patterns often comprise a new avenue for thinking and can bring forth an empowering sense of choice and possibility. In order to create well-formed outcomes, it is possible to use the Life Levels technique. Using this technique, we can consider our various capabilities and how we may be able to use them in different contexts. This kind of reflection, in turn, gives us an extremely useful analysis of our skills and abilities and leads the way to the establishment of well-formed outcomes (Revell & Norman, 1999). The six levels that may guide our thinking about our outcomes are as follows:

- Environment

- Behavior

- Capabilities

- Beliefs

- Identity

- Spirit

Environment is the context of our lives; it is the "where" and "when" (O'Connor, 1998, p.48). You may want to think about what kinds of places that you can imagine yourself once you achieve your outcome. You may also want to reflect on whether there are any places that having your outcomes may not prove to be useful. Behavior is thinking about the kinds of things that you will be doing when you have actually achieved your outcome. Let us take an example. If you wish to become a more positive communicator with your learners, you may want to imagine talking to your learners in the classroom in a positive and pleasant manner.

Capabilities draw attention to your abilities and skills. Using the same example, we may question ourselves about what we need to learn to become a more positive communicator. Reflecting on our existing capabilities means considering the ones that we already possess and paying attention to those that w e may need to acquire. Beliefs are our guiding road maps; they can direct us to our destination. Whilst trying to establish well-formed outcomes, you may want to check your beliefs and determine those that can enhance your future tasks and those that may hinder them.

You may also want to check whether these criteria fit in with your intended identity or the sense of who you are (Revell & Norman, 1999). Looking at your outcome from this perspective can also allow you to determine the different roles you may wish to take within this new identity. Finally, at the spirit level, you may want to consider how your outcome fits in with your overall purpose of your life.

Creative Visualization

Having established well-formed criteria for achieving a particular outcome, an empowering second step is visualizing it. Creative visualization (Gawain, 1995) is an extremely powerful tool in not only getting into a resourceful state but also accessing the necessary resources that may be required in order to achieve your outcome.

Before doing visualization however, a preliminary step is to prepare both the mind and body by breathing. Breath is seen as the important link between our physical and mental worlds. It can cleanse and strengthen the physical body and calm the mind. Creative visualization acts on the belief that the relaxed mind is the most receptive mind. Deep abdominal breathing and alternate nostril breathing are two excellent ways of preparing the mind and body for visualization ((From Yoga Mind and Body, Sıvananda Yoga Vedenta Center, 1998).

- Is a powerful tool of inner learning

- Makes use of mental imagery

- Can be used for many purposes

Creative visualization can be used for many purposes as can be seen below:

- Relaxation

- Improving your health

- Improving your relationships

- Problem solving

- Planning your future life

- Reaching career goals

- Tapping into one's creativity

The two basic steps in doing creative visualiation are learning how to visualize and practicing it. Below is a procedure that you may want to follow when you are doing visualization.

- Have a clear and definite goal.

- Relax your body and breathe rhythmically and deeply.

- Formulate in your mind a scenario, an object or event.

- See in your mind's eye all the relevant details in five senses.

- Always entertain only positive thoughts, feelings and words (affirmations).

- Practice at least twice a day about 10 min each time.

- Persevere in your action until you succeed.

Conclusion

This article has focused on the use of NLP strategies for thinking and reprogramming and has attempted to suggest various strategies that we can use as teachers for our own personal development whether in a personal or professional context. It has drawn attention to the importance of understanding the structue of thought and the essential issues in reprogramming ourselves.

Perhaps the story of the frog in a frog race can best emphasize the road that we as teachers need to take in discovering our true potential and achieving our outcomes and dreams. The frogs in a race are gradually discouraged by the audience who does not believe that any frog can actually win the race, with the acceptance of one. This frog reaches the finish line and when asked how he managed it, he fails to respond as he is deaf. The moral of this story is three-fold: First, we need to avoid listening to the people who are in the habit of being and telling the negative as we need to focus on the positive. Second, we need to remember that words are very powerful and use and think in positive language. Finally, we need to be deaf to the people who tell you that you can never achieve your dreams in order to break free of whatever prison w e may have created for ourselves and embrace the present in a healthy way. It is only then that we can improve our inner world, be at peace with ourselves, love ourselves and reach our true potential, thereby enabling the art of excellence.

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